



News Release

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Crown Hill open house slated Feb. 19 to discuss European gypsy moth spraying

OLYMPIA – A plan to eradicate European gypsy moths from a Crown Hill neighborhood is the subject of an open house the state Department of Agriculture has scheduled from 6 p.m. to 8 p.m. Feb. 19 at the Whittier Elementary School, 1320 NW 75th St., Seattle. Spraying of a 16.5-acre site with ground equipment is proposed to eradicate a population of gypsy moths that continues to reproduce in that area.

Crown Hill residents are invited to drop in anytime during the two-hour period to review material and ask questions. Representatives from the Department of Agriculture's gypsy moth team will be on hand to provide information on the infestation and proposed treatment.

European gypsy moth activity has been detected in the Crown Hill neighborhood for three consecutive years. Last year eight gypsy moths, four egg masses, and five pupal cases were detected in the area. In 2000 one moth was caught. In 1999 three moths were caught.

The state Department of Agriculture is proposing to treat the 16.5-acre site with a biological insecticide Foray 48B containing *Bacillus thuringiensis* var. *kurstaki* (*Btk*), using trucks and spray equipment similar to that used by lawn and tree care companies. Three treatments are proposed, seven to 14 days apart, beginning in late April or early May.

Boundaries of the proposed 16.5-acre treatment are 1) in the north, 83rd St. NW, 2) in the east 8th Ave. NW, 3) in the south, an east-west line running two properties south of 80th St. NW, and 4) in the west, 10th Ave. NW.

The gypsy moth is one of America's worst forest pest insects. It feeds on the foliage of more than 500 different species of trees and shrubs and causes millions of dollars in economic and environmental damage. State agriculture officials believe that if the gypsy moth were to become permanently established in the Evergreen State, it would have a devastating impact on the state's agriculture, nursery, and timber industries.

Foray 48B has been registered for use by the U.S. Environmental Protection Agency and has a proven safety record with people, pets, livestock, birds, fish, and other insects such as bees. *Btk* has been evaluated in a final environmental impact statement, which includes human health and ecological risk assessments.

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Found naturally in the soil, *Btk* is toxic only to moths and butterflies in the caterpillar stage when the insecticide is applied. It is commonly used by organic gardeners, and it has been used on gypsy moth control projects since the early 1980s.

Since the state began gypsy moth insecticide treatments in the 1970s, a total of 71 treatments have been made. Fifty-four of the treatments have been by ground and 17 by air, depending on the size of the treatment area and access to the trees and shrubs.

Between the time a proposal is made and the treatment actually begins, the Department of Agriculture complies with applicable state and federal environmental laws. Two environmental documents are prepared and made available for 30-day public review and comment periods. One document is an environmental checklist, and the other is a draft environmental assessment.

The environmental checklist and draft environmental assessment should be ready for public review in March. The documents will be available for review on the Department of Agriculture's Web site at agr.wa.gov/gypsy.htm and at selected libraries around the state.

Call the Department of Agriculture's toll-free Pest Program Hotline at (800) 443-6684 for dates when the documents will be posted to the Web site and made available at selected libraries.

State agriculture officials will carefully review any comments submitted before a decision to proceed with the treatment is made.

For more information call (800) 443-67684; send e-mail to PestProgram@agr.wa.gov; or visit the Department of Agriculture's Web site at <http://agr.wa.gov>.

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